

March 02, 2015

PUBLIC SAFETY/JUSTICE FACILITY COMMITTEE REPORT

A Public Safety/Justice Facility Committee meeting was held on Monday, March 02, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. in the Quorum Court Room, County Administration Building, Third Floor, 215 East Central, Bentonville, Arkansas

Committee Members Present: Jones, Adams, Allen, Leadabrand, Anglin, Shadlow, Moehring

Others Present: JP's Sandlin, Meyers, County Judge Bob Clinard, Circuit Judge Doug Schrantz, Circuit Judge Tom Smith, Circuit Judge John Scott, Prosecuting Attorney Nathan Smith, Comptroller Brenda Guenther, Captain Jeremy Gyll, Major Nathan Atchison, Hight-Jackson Associates Director Gary Jackson, Project Director Allie McKenzie, Jay Allen - Walton Family Foundation, and Brenda Anderson - Downtown Bentonville, Inc.

Media: Tom Sissom

JP Jones called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Public Comments

None

Discussion – Jail Expansion

County Judge Bob Clinard reported that they are working on a potential expansion of the jail facility. He stated that currently H-Pod is being used as the women's facility but not being used to its fullest capacity.

Jail Captain Jeremy Gyll reported that in 2010, F-Pod was built to hold inmates charged with misdemeanors, and held 80 to 100 state inmates. He stated that currently there are 205 inmates being held, and 25 were sent to the state prison on Friday.

Captain Gyll stated that currently H-Pod houses women inmates and that the number of women inmates has increased from 60 to 100.

Captain Gyll stated that currently the state pays the county \$28 per day per inmate to house state prisoners. He said that the state is often late with their payments and not accurate. He stated that the cities are paying \$40 a day, are always on time, and we never have any issues with them. He said that we have to kick those city inmates out the jail because we do not have room to house them.

Lengthy discussion was held on an expansion of the jail facility to ease the overcrowding of the jail.

Prosecuting Attorney Nathan Smith stated that when determining a location for a new courts facility, he wanted the committee to consider that there are a lot of benefits to staying downtown. He stated that the 45 employees in his office enjoy using the amenities downtown, such as the walking trails and the restaurants.

Discussion – Location for New Courts Facility – Downtown Option

Hight-Jackson Associates Director Gary Jackson stated that the courts play a critical role in a democratic society. He stated that the Benton County Courthouse was built in 1928 and is an

outstanding example of the architecture of that period, but is in need of substantial repair work. He said that the option being presented tonight is the best proposal. He stated that with the growth and expected population increase in the county, Benton County needs a new courthouse that is going to last 80 to 100 years, as just the present one has done.

Project Director Allie McKenzie presented a PowerPoint presentation of the proposal for a potential downtown courts building. She stated that the focus tonight will be on concept G-2. She stated that one of the most important elements of concept G-2 is the skywalk connection to the historic courthouse. She stated that all downtown circuit court functions will be in one secure facility. She then reported the different construction phases for concept G-2:

Phase 1 - \$2.9 million

- Renovation of historic courthouse 1st floor
 - Necessary exterior repairs
 - Heat, air, electrical, plumbing upgrades
 - Prosecuting attorneys' offices

Phase 2 - \$10.5 million

- New building with five courtrooms
- Skywalk connection to historic courthouse
- Shell space for two future courtrooms

Phase 3 - \$1.8 million

- Renovation of Annex building

Phase 4 - \$6.0 million

- Renovation of historic courthouse 2nd, 3rd, and 4th floors
- Tower

Allie McKenzie stated that the new building plan provides the county with a projected 69,624 square feet of additional space for the courts system and carries an estimated cost of \$32.2 million.

Jay Allen, spokesperson for the Walton Family Foundation, stated that the Walton Family Foundation has already agreed to provide \$2.9 to do some renovation work on the historic courthouse. He stated another \$2 million grant will be made available for work on the annex if the county chooses to stay downtown. He added that another contribution would come through the foundation paying the \$944,000 cost of land acquisition needed for the project.

Allie McKenzie reported that the parking summary includes: 1) 606 spaces available within one block of county facilities; 2) 21C hotel parking deck to provide an additional 113 spaces on jury pool day, 3) future addition parking could be available if the old JDC is torn down.

Allie McKenzie stated in summary; 1) All downtown Circuit Court functions are in one secure facility; 2) Simplifies security by providing one public entry; 3) Separate, secure parking is provided for all Circuit Judges whose chambers are in the new building; 4) Separate, secure detainee circulation is provided; 5) Parking capacity is increased and dedicated county parking will be provided; 6) Existing county owned buildings continue to be used; 7) The public and staff will continue to enjoy existing downtown amenities within walking distance.

Lengthy discussion was held regarding the presentation on the potential downtown concept G-2 plan and the concern for enough downtown parking spaces.

Downtown Bentonville, Inc. President Brenda Anderson stated that a recent survey stated that the project would increase parking within a one-block radius of the courthouse by 101 spaces. She stated that Downtown Bentonville, Inc. has had talks with the city about improving signage to direct people to some of the parking areas.

Further discussion was held on the options available for additional parking in the downtown area.

JP Jones announced that a Public Safety – Justice Facility meeting will be held Monday, March 16, 2015 at 6:00 p.m.

Other Business

None

After motion and second, the meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.